

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GreenRibbonSchools



Highlights from the 2014 Honorees



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www.ed.gov/green-ribbon-schools - www.ed.gov/green-strides



Introduction

You may have heard that ED has fairly limited authority from Congress in the areas of school facilities, health, and environment. The good news is that U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS) has enabled the agency to work in unprecedented ways with counterparts at the Environmental Protection Agency; the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Energy; and other natural resource agencies; as well as collaborators across the private sector, to share hundreds of effective programs for schools and, of course, spotlight the best practices across the nation of our selectees.

In the same way that we are working together across federal agencies like never before, in order to select their nominees to ED, state education agencies also have collaborated in exceptional ways with their state health, environment, and energy agencies. And private sector, both for-profit and nonprofit, has gotten involved at federal, state, local, and school levels, working with schools and governments. Through all of this new collaboration, ED's recognition award has become a tool to get your government working better together to the benefit of students across the nation. Now that's something we can all get behind, whether red, blue...or green!

The ED-GRS Pillars of reduced environmental impact and costs, improved health and wellness, and effective environmental education remain the same. Increasingly, and particularly among the district awardees, honorees' efforts are the result of new, more coordinated policies at the intersection of environment, health, and education at state and district levels -- precisely what we had hoped this award might encourage! We are pleased to see that the award has prompted schools and administrators nationwide to acknowledge the critical need for students to learn in a manner -- and a place -- that will sustain both them and the planet. These green schools have taught us that it's not just *what* students are learning; the *where* matters too.

Over the last three years, we've been thrilled with the new collaborations at the federal, state, and local levels as a result of ED's green recognition award. But the collaborations that inspire us most are those of our school and district honorees that have built alliances to enable their phenomenal work. Apart from progress in all three Pillars -- not just one -- you'll notice another common thread among them: All have been tremendously resourceful in partnering with nearby businesses, parks, colleges, farms, museums, nature centers, sporting facilities, religious institutions, townships, and countless other entities.

Our honorees are by no means the wealthiest schools and districts. In fact, over the last three years, nearly half of our honorees have educated underserved student populations, and not because we have a special award category for them. When it



comes to green schools, these high-poverty schools come out on top when everyone plays together. That green school practices continue to be used as a tool to improve the built environments, health, and engagement of students that might seem to have the slimmest chances for success, and that they are once again, excelling and thriving as a result of these efforts, is no longer a surprise to us.

This year's selectees were confirmed from a pool of candidates voluntarily nominated and exhaustively reviewed by 30 state education agency implementation teams. While selection processes vary from state to state, selection committees are generally comprised of members from several state agencies as well as outside experts. In the second step of selection, states' nominees to ED were reviewed by our team of several dozen federal reviewers from across five agencies. This year we have selected 48 schools and 9 districts to spotlight their exemplary efforts to make their schools healthier, safer, more cost efficient, and sustainable – for all to emulate.

Across government, we again were awed and inspired by the efforts undertaken by the schools and districts selected. The U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools and District Sustainability Awardees prove that any school or district can take simple steps to cut costs and improve the health, safety, and educational adequacy of school facilities; ensure good nutrition and fitness practices for a lifetime of wellness, productivity, and achievement; and use the environment as a lens to engage students in hands-on learning in STEM subjects, languages, social studies, arts, and humanities.

Schools can use this sustainability context not only to boost test scores, but to teach students the important civic values and skills that will encourage them to grow into responsible, compassionate, and contributing citizens. Furthermore, this interest in the natural world and engagement in environmental concepts from an early age nurtures precisely the type of thinking that the technology and sustainability careers of the future require, whether these students graduate from green career and technical programs or green college preparatory schools.

This sustainable education doesn't begin in high school – or end there. Healthy, safe, educationally adequate school environments, wellness practices, and environmental education are for every student, every year, from the earliest learners, because all students deserve that strong foundation. Further, just as our pre-K to 12 school and district honorees use resource efficiencies to cut millions of dollars in utility costs, the colleges and universities where students continue their studies very well can use the same practices to reduce costs -- and pass these savings on to attendees!



Speaking of postsecondary institutions, you may have wondered what's next for ED-GRS, now that we have a school and district award, a Green Strides resources-sharing portal, and an annual best-practices tour. Well, it just so happens that we've added a postsecondary category this year, which we hope colleges, universities and their state authorities will take on with the same gusto as the district and school categories.

It is with tremendous pleasure and great pride that we present the third annual cohort of U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools and District Sustainability Awardees. These schools and districts are ensuring that their students learn to live, work, and play with sustainability and health in mind, not as an afterthought, but as an integral part of everything they undertake, from cradle to career.

The 2014 Green Ribbons are finally here. Prepare to be amazed! We were. When you recover, go to our www.ed.gov/green-strides page and get started using some of the very same tools these schools and districts employ.

Andrea S. Falken

Andrea Suarez Falken
Director, U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools and
Facilities, Health, and Environment Liaison



West Virginia

Cameron Middle-High School, Cameron W.V.

Outdoor Learning for Rural Green Careers

Schools are unique in their social, cultural, geographical, economic, and academic challenges. Cameron Middle-High School (CMHS), a rural seventh- through 12th-grade school within the 312-square-mile Marshall County School District, is making the most of its challenges in order to create a student body – and community – with wise environmental habits that will carry them into the future. CMHS epitomizes best practices in energy efficiency and commitment to LEED; health, wellness, and nutrition of students through Farm to School programming, breakfast and lunch programs, fitness activities, and outdoor education; and sustainability and environmental literacy.

For the past five years, during the construction of the school, the school district has been committed to LEED building principles, as well as to sustainability curriculum development. CMHS was named West Virginia's 2014 Black Bear Award winner as the state's most sustainable school. In January 2013, CMHS won the Building Conference's Placemaker Award for Innovation and Design.

Under the science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) umbrella, CMHS recently started a Project Lead the Way class, which emphasizes awareness of STEAM careers for CMHS students through integrating these content areas into careers. Four staff members have been trained for this program and the art teacher will work on STEAM extensions with this staff. Through these curricula, CMHS instills entrepreneurship in students and, working with Sustainable Learning Systems, the school is able to collaborate with schools within the district and with districts around the nation through Green Schools for Teachers.

CMHS students attend soil conservation camp and forestry camp each year. Future Farmers of America students produce eggs, hams, bacon, and produce to sell to faculty, students, and the community. Agriculture students have a meat processing plant within the school building and a greenhouse for growing seasonal produce for sale. Greenhouse and horticulture classes utilize outdoor space at the school and the football stadium to practice hands-on skill development, such as proper pruning techniques of perennial shrubs and proper weed removal from the site. Students make wreaths and other decorations from these pruned materials. An agriculture education instructor received a \$1,800.00 grant from an energy company to develop trails, and identify native and invasive shrubs on the school grounds. Forestry students used the wooded areas for leaf and tree identification, as well as studied conservation methods in the forestry field. Wildlife management classes make use



of vast wooded sites to observe wildlife and their natural habitats as well as to study the migration routes and trails of animals. CHS provides innovative classes that integrate environmental science, physical activity, and career and technical courses. Through studying on-site all that is in and around the school, CHS helps students become college- and career-ready.

CMHS recycles with a vengeance. Recycle bins are in the cafeteria, and the entire school recycles all paper in collaboration with Hilltop Elementary, Marshall County's other LEED-certified school. Other products being recycled or reused include newspaper and catalogs in the art room, clothes in the home economics room (which are turned into salable fashion items), and planting trays in the agriculture education room. Students and faculty have taken on community service projects around recycling and improving the school environment, including schoolwide and communitywide recycling and cleanup projects, and a composting workshop for school staff and students.

Eastwood Elementary School, Morgantown, W.V.

Growing Healthy Kids in a Healthy World

Eastwood Elementary School, home of the Black Bears, is Monongalia County Schools' first LEED certification candidate. Located in Morgantown, W.V., the school commits daily to its mission of "Growing Healthy Kids in a Healthy World" through a focus on curriculum, health, and wellness; the arts; world languages; and community connections. Staff, students, and families use the school as an instructional tool to learn about their effect on the community and the broader world.

Eastwood's unique design is reducing its environmental impact daily. Energy savings is achieved through the use of enhanced wall and roof insulation, and a geothermal heating and cooling system, as well as other energy-saving features. These sustainable qualities allow Eastwood to use about 25 percent less energy than a conventional school of the same size. The school also is designed to maximize the amount of natural daylighting in classrooms through classroom orientation, oversize windows with light shelves and sunscreens, sloped ceilings, light classroom wall colors, and electronic sensors to adjust the output of artificial lighting. Water savings is achieved through the use of waterless urinals, dual-flush toilets, and reduced-flow fixtures, which results in water use of over 31 percent less than in a traditional elementary school.

In addition to the Indoor Air Quality construction-management plan followed during construction of Eastwood, Monongalia County Schools also has implemented a



green cleaning program for Eastwood, which will reduce the use of harsh, ecologically unfriendly and unsafe chemicals. The recycling program at Eastwood inspires an understanding of the importance of the creation of new materials from recyclable products. One such program the school supports is the Land Fill Harmonic, which makes musical instruments out of recycled products for at-risk youths.

Operating in the healthy environment that Eastwood offers has inspired staff and students to be mindful of the health and wellness of those in the building as well. The school has committed to promoting a healthy quality of life, with a focus on lifelong wellness and physical activity for students, families, staff, and community members. As a preventive arm to health care, Eastwood is creating exemplary programs that will include a consistent, research-based fitness program through physical education; opportunities for physical activity during school; a before- and after-school fitness program for students; on-site wellness and fitness programs for staff; and planned wellness programs, classes, and activities for families and the community at large.

Healthy choices taught and modeled. Eastwood's staff has embraced the Responsive Classroom program. This program provides students with energizer breaks throughout the day. Staff and students have learned about food allergies, and the school has a wellness coordinator on staff that educates staff members about exercise and nutrition, and offers activities to promote healthy lifestyle choices. Eastwood also hosts the Smile Program, a visiting dentist that takes care of dental work for students on site.

Eastwood teachers are committed to educating students about their environment. The school has received a grant to participate in the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) program. All classroom teachers participated in GLOBE training, and the first through fifth grades participated in GLOBE's cloud protocol and surface temperature field campaigns. In addition to the many features embedded in the construction and operation of the school, the campus contains two unique and distinctive renewable energy teaching tools. The windmill and solar panels at Eastwood are used to help demonstrate how the energy from the sun and wind are converted into electricity. Students also use rain gardens to observe and study various animal habitats.



Acknowledgements

This year, ED-GRS was all about sustainability. Real institutional sustainability, that is. We learned from our green schools on our 2013 best practices tour, which had, from coast to coast, a number of striking similarities – the ubiquitous “green team” among them. Here at ED, we now have a robust ED Green Team as well, recruited from across the Department to forge a full staff, even in tight times. You may have heard that ED-GRS was launched only three years ago, without funding, new statutory authorities or, indeed, more than a single employee. As the movement has grown across the nation, so too has our team here at ED to bolster your work – most notably, without a single new hire.

I am as proud of our ED Green Team as of our latest cohort of honorees: Strategic Communications Manager Jeanne Ackerson, Web Content Manager Malissa Coleman, Social Media Manager Kyle Flood, Creative Design Manager Cory Leitao, Newsletter Editor Brendan Loughran, and Publications Manager Jennifer Padgett have managed to find time, in addition to their regular duties, whether they work in the Office of Communications and Outreach, the Office of the Secretary or the Office of the General Counsel, to help recognize the innovative work that you do. Let me tell you, like our honorees, they are a truly impressive bunch!

Thanks go to several other ED colleagues who pitched in this year: Meredith Bajgier, Joe Barison, Diana Huffman, Linda Pauley, Elaine Venard, and Nicole White. We also thank 50-plus federal reviewers at other agencies for their time and expertise, particularly at the EPA, DOE, NOAA, and USFS. Once again, it is truly a team effort.

Of course, this entire award would not be possible without the participation of some 30 state education agencies and their partners, which constitute their own green teams to implement statewide competitions that select schools and districts to nominate to ED. They are a most dedicated group of facilities, health, and environmental education professionals, who support the work of the schools and districts in your state.

Finally, thanks to Adam Honeysett, Managing Director of State and Local Outreach for his unfailing support to school facilities, health, and environment at ED.

